



National Assembly for Wales
Europe Matters

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The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.



The European and External Affairs Committee at Llangollen Eisteddfod.

(L-R): Back row: **Mervyn Cousins** - Executive Director of Eisteddfod, **Terry Waite CBE** - Eisteddfod President, **Michael German AM**, **Mike Pugh** - Mayor of Llangollen, **Phillip Davies** - Chairman of the Eisteddfod. Front row: **Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM**, **Sandy Mewies AM** - Committee Chair, **Janet Ryder AM** - Chair of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Wales Branch, **Mrs Pugh** - Mayor's wife, **Rogiero Verma** - Royal Commonwealth Society Wales.

Introduction

I am delighted to welcome you to the 14th issue of Europe Matters, our regular update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales on European issues.

As we come to the end of the summer term I would like to take this opportunity to look back on the work we have undertaken during 2009, and also say a special thanks to the Committee of the Regions for making available their video conference facilities in Brussels for two of our evidence sessions, which is a first hand example of European co-operation in practice.

The European and External Affairs Committee has focused in particular on two issues of importance to Wales. On 14 July we adopted an interim report from the inquiry into the draft Directive on patients' rights to cross-border healthcare, which focuses on ensuring the discussions in Brussels take account of the decentralised healthcare systems that exist in a number of Member States, as is the case with the NHS in Wales in the UK context. We have also highlighted concerns about the potential impact the Directive could have on service provision in Wales, uncertainties about legal redress if problems arise when Welsh patients are treated outside the UK, and assurances that the Directive will not create inequalities or inequities in access to services.

We have held four evidence sessions for our inquiry into the future of EU Cohesion Policy, and are on schedule to adopt a report with recommendations before the end of 2009, timed to coincide with the appointment of the next EU Commissioner for Regional Affairs. This is a crucially important dossier for Wales, not least in the context of the economic downturn and its impact on Wales and the rest of Europe.

I am delighted to say that we are at the forefront of the European debate, having taken evidence from the former Commissioner Danuta Hübner, former Director General of DG Regional Policy Graham Meadows, and a number of other key stakeholders in Brussels and Wales.

We will hold further evidence sessions in the autumn, when we will also look at the future of the Lisbon Strategy, which is inextricably linked to the future of EU Cohesion Policy. We also expect to take a further update from Christine Chapman, the Assembly's full representative on the Committee of the Regions (CoR), on her draft opinion on the future of the Lisbon Strategy, which is scheduled to be adopted in the CoR in December.

With European elections in June and the appointment of a new European Commission expected before the end of the year, 2009 has been a period of transition, and for Wales this means four new MEPs, three of whom take up post in Brussels for the first time. We look forward to working actively with them in the future on key issues of importance to Wales.

The second half of 2009 will be led by the Swedish Presidency of the EU, with their focus on economy, employment and climate. The other key issue will be the second referendum in Ireland on the future of the Treaty of Lisbon, following the agreement of a number of "Irish guarantees" at the European Council in June. A "yes" vote could see ratification of the treaty before the end of the year. This would have direct implications in Wales through a new "Subsidiarity Protocol", which introduces a formal consultation process with national parliaments – and as appropriate, regional parliaments with legislative powers, which would include the National Assembly for Wales – on all draft legislative acts coming out of the European Union.

The European and External Affairs Committee carried out an inquiry into “subsidiarity” at the end of 2008, publishing a report in March 2009, and we are in ongoing discussions with our colleagues in the Houses of Parliament, Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly to explore how this new protocol would apply in the UK.

In the Assembly’s other Committees, Enterprise and Learning Committee published their report on the inquiry into the impact of the economic downturn on the Welsh economy, the Sustainability Committee has been taking evidence in its inquiry into flooding in Wales, and the Rural Development Sub-Committee has published the report from its inquiry into production and promotion of Welsh food.

In May the Subordinate Legislation Committee adopted a report from its scrutiny of “Subordinate Legislation and Delegated Powers”, which included a section on transposition of EU directives in Wales.

Finally, it was a pleasure to attend, with my fellow Committee members Mike German OBE and Rhodri Glyn Thomas, the National Assembly for Wales’s stand at the International Musical Eisteddfod in Llangollen. We were honoured to hear the Eisteddfod’s President, Terry Waite CBE, speak on the theme of ‘One World, One Vision, One Youth’, and we took questions from the general public on the Committee’s external relations work.

Sandy Mewies

Chair of the European and External Affairs Committee



EU related topics in the Assembly's Committees

European and External Affairs Committee

- **Inquiry into Patients' Rights in Cross-Border Healthcare:** the Committee published its interim report on 14 July
- **Inquiry into Future of EU Cohesion Policy:** the Committee took evidence from the First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, the Welsh Local Government Association, Business Europe and Saxony Anhalt in its meetings in June
- **Swedish Presidency of EU:** His Excellency Staffan Carlsson, the Swedish Ambassador to the UK, attended the 14 July meeting to inform the Committee of the Swedish priorities for their Presidency of the EU, which runs from 1 July to end of 2009
- **British Council:** the Committee welcomed representatives from the British Council Wales and British Council to discuss their work on international issues of relevance to Wales

Communities and Culture Committee

- **Promoting Welsh Arts and Culture on the World Stage:** the Committee's report, published on 15 July, calls for a strategic plan to co-ordinate the international promotion of Wales' arts and culture, recognising the social and economic benefits this can deliver.

Enterprise and Learning Committee

- **Generating Jobs in the Green Economy:** the Committee plans to carry out an inquiry in this area, as a follow up to its inquiry into the Welsh Government's response to the international economic downturn, and to contribute to the debate on the implementation of the Green Jobs Strategy for Wales
- **Economic Contribution of Higher Education in Wales:** as a follow up to the interim report published in January this year, the Committee will publish the final report and recommendations from this inquiry in the autumn

Independent Review Panel on Financial Support to Members

- **Review of financial support of Assembly Members:** the Independent Review Panel published its report "Getting it Right for Wales" from its review of allowances and expenses for Assembly Members, and the recommendations of the report were agreed unanimously by the Assembly Commission on 9 July. The review included information on remuneration processes from a number of sub-national legislative bodies in Europe

Sustainability Committee

- **Inquiry into Flooding in Wales:** this inquiry is ongoing and further evidence will be taken during the autumn term

Rural Development Sub-Committee

- **Inquiry into the Production and Promotion of Welsh Food:** the Committee launched its report from this inquiry at the Royal Welsh Show in Builth Wells on 21 July
- **Future inquiries:** the Sub-Committee will be carrying out inquiries into the future of the uplands and the dairy industry in Wales during the autumn term. Further details on these will be available over the summer

Subordinate Legislation Committee

- **Scrutiny of Subordinate Legislation and Delegated Powers:** in May the Committee published the report from this inquiry, which includes a chapter on the transposition of European legislation in the UK and Wales. The Committee received evidence identifying the commitment of the UK and Scottish Governments to provide their Parliaments with clearer and better information on the implementation of European Union Legislation, and the Committee believes the Assembly and the public would benefit from a similar approach being adopted by the Welsh government. The report identifies how the Committee can work together with the European and External Affairs Committee, to monitor transposition of EU legislation of particular interest or concern to Wales, and to make this process more transparent

External activities of Members on Assembly business

- On 15-19 June a cross-party group of Assembly Members – Deputy Presiding Officer, Rosemary Butler, Alun Cairns, Jeff Cuthbert, Mike German, David Melding and Janet Ryder – participated in the **British Isles and Mediterranean Regions 40th Annual Conference** in Guernsey
- **Committee of the Regions:** Christine Chapman attended the UK delegation meeting in London on 22 June 2009, as well as a stakeholder meeting on the Lisbon Strategy organised by the Department of Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. On 2 July she attended the ECOS Commission meeting in Brussels, and during this visit met with a number of EU regions, Commission officials and UK Government officers as part of the preparatory work for her report on the Future of the Lisbon Strategy post 2010
- On 7-8 July the Deputy Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler attended the **Standing Committee meeting of Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE)** in Venice, which discussed the work programme of the Tyrol Presidency for 2009
- On 10 July Sandy Mewies, Mike German OBE and Rhodri Glyn Thomas attended the **Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod**

International visitors to the Senedd

- On 10 June a reception for **Chevening Scholars** based in Wales was held at the Senedd on behalf of the British Council
- On 18 June the **Irish Ambassador** to the UK, Mr Bobby Mc Donagh visited the Assembly and was met by Assembly Member Mark Isherwood
- On 22 June a delegation from the **Cuban Health Union** visited the Assembly for a series of meetings and a tour of the Senedd
- On 29 June the Assembly arranged a visit for a delegation from the **Kenyan Parliament and the East Africa Legislative Assembly** to learn about the Assembly's electronic voting system. The visit was arranged by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.
- On 8 July the Assembly hosted a visit by the Honourable Barry House MLC, President of the Legislative Council, **Parliament of Western Australia**
- On 9 July a delegation from the **Philippines Senate** visited the Assembly for an overview of the Assembly organised by the British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union
- On 13 July a tour of the Senedd was arranged for Mr Arnold Footee, **President of the World Federation of Consuls**
- On 14 July the **Speaker of the Australian Parliament**, Mr Harry Jenkins MP, visited the Assembly for a series of meetings and met the Deputy Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler, and Assembly Members Jeff Cuthbert and Mike German OBE

Links

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